

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9589

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS PRIORITY

USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

CIA PRIORITY

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

USAREUR PRIORITY

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UNCLAS BRUSSELS 0194

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, MILI, BE

SUBJECT: REPORTED THIEF OF NATO MISSILES

REF: BRUSSELS 154, BRUSSELS 180 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: BELGIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF ALLEGED DISAPPEARANCE
OF MISSILES FROM EUROPEAN BASES EXPANDS ON JANUARY 11, WITH
ONE PAPER SPECULATING THAT STORY WAS REALLY PLANT BY SOME
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EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY WISHING TO ABSOLVE THE EAST OF ANY

BLAME WHEN AND IF SAM-7 MISSILES ARE DISCOVERED IN THE HANDS OF TERRORISTS. END SUMMARY.

2. "LA LIBRE BELGIQUE", IN FRONT PAGE STORY, ASKS WHETHER BELGIAN PRESS SPOKESMAN COULD HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO EASTERN EUROPEAN BASES WHEN HE SPOKE OF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MISSILES, SINCE NATO AND ALL WESTERN COUNTRIES WHERE PORTABLE MISSILES ARE LOCATED HAVE DENIED THE LOSS OF ANY MISSILES. STORY NOTES THAT NIKE AND HAWK MISSILES, USED BY SEVERAL NATO COUNTRY ARMIES INCLUDING BELGIUM, ARE TOO BIG AND HEAVY TO BE SPIRITED AWAY. WITH RESPECT TO PORTABLE MISSILES, "LA LIBRE BELGIQUE" REPORTS THAT SWEDISH EMBASSY IN BRUSSELS DENIED THAT ANY "ROBOT-69" MISSILES WERE MISSING AND THAT THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN BRUSSELS MADE THE SAME DENIAL WITH REGARD TO "BLOWPIPE". ARTICLE GOES ON TO STATE THAT THE US "REDEYE" MISSILE IS NOT PRESENTLY IN THE INVENTORY OF ANY EUROPEAN NATO ARMY, ALTHOUGH 800 SUCH MISSILES ARE SCHEDULED FOR DELIVERY TO THE FRG THIS YEAR AND SALES MAY BE MADE TO DENMARK AND THE NETHERLANDS AS WELL. PAPER REPORTS STATEMENT BY NATO SPOKESMAN TO THE EFFECT THAT NO MISSILES HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM ANY MILITARY INSTALLATIONS USED BY NATO.

3. "LA LIBRE BELGIQUE" PUTS FORTH THE "HYPOTHESIS" THAT SOME EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY, AS A HEDGE AGAINST FUTURE DISCOVERY OF SAM-7 MISSILES IN THE HANDS OF TERRORISTS, HAD LEAKED THE STORY ABOUT AN ALLEGED MISSILE DISAPPEARANCE AND ARRANGED FOR A WESTERN SPOKESMAN (IN THIS CASE THE BELGIAN) TO ANNOUNCE THAT A MISSILE THEFT HAD TAKEN PLACE. IN THIS WAY, GOES THE HYPOTHESIS, THE EAST COULD THEN LATER POINT BACK TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND PROCLAIM ITSELF INNOCENT OF HAVING WILLINGLY PROVIDED MISSILES TO TERRORISTS (VIA ARAB COUNTRIES).

4. "LE PEUPLE", FOLLOWING ITS BANNER HEADLINES STORY OF THE PREVIOUS DAY, MERELY NOTES INCONSPICUOUSLY THAT THE BELGIAN SPOKESMAN HAD NOT SAID THAT MISSILES HAD DISAPPEARED FROM "NATO" BASES, I.E., THAT THE WORD "NATO" HAD NOT BEEN USED. "HET VOLK", "HET LAATSTE NIEUWS" AND "DE STANDAARD", THE LATTER TWO IN MAJOR FRONT PAGE STORIES, REPORT VARIOUS DENIALS OF MISSILE LOSSES BY SHAPE, NATO AND US SOURCES.

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5. "HET LAATSTE NIEUWS" REPORTS THAT, ACCORDING TO A "BRUSSELS SOURCE", THE MISSILES IN QUESTION DID NOT DISAPPEAR FROM EASTERN EUROPEAN BASES BUT RATHER FROM WESTERN EUROPEAN BASES; THEREFORE, THE REPORT DOES NOT CONCERN SAM MISSILES. (WE ARE TOLD BY ONE OF THE JOURNALISTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN WRITING THIS STORY THAT THE "BRUSSELS SOURCE" WAS AN UNSPECIFIED OFFICIAL IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.) STRAUZ-HUPE

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